

CITY OF SOMERVILLE
JOSEPH A. CURTATONE, MAYOR

Community Innovation Center

Request for Information

I. Project Summary

The City of Somerville through the economic development division of the Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development (“OSPCD”), invites proposals from qualified applicants for the development of a “Community Innovation Center”.

In Somerville, we like to say that while others have innovation districts, we are the Innovation City. University and industry partnerships have been critical to establishing Somerville as a citywide incubator of smart, forward-looking ideas.

Our former industrial buildings and districts now house some of Boston’s largest artist communities along with the next-generation of technology startups developing the future of mobility, clean-technology, and smart-manufacturing. SomerNova, located in the former Ames Envelope Factory in Union Square, is a prime example of this exciting melting pot of ideas hosting both the largest clean-technology incubator in the country, Greentown Labs, with over 60 hardware startups only steps away from the largest artist and makerspace in the country, Artisans Asylum.

Our investments in the future of this city are second-to-none. The Green Line Extension, a \$2 billion light-rail project, when completed in 2021 will put 85% of Somerville within a half-mile of public transit and connect thousands of residents to jobs and opportunities throughout the region. Our high school reconstruction project is a \$250 million investment in the next generation of residents. Across Somerville, the foundation is literally being built for a bright new phase in our city.

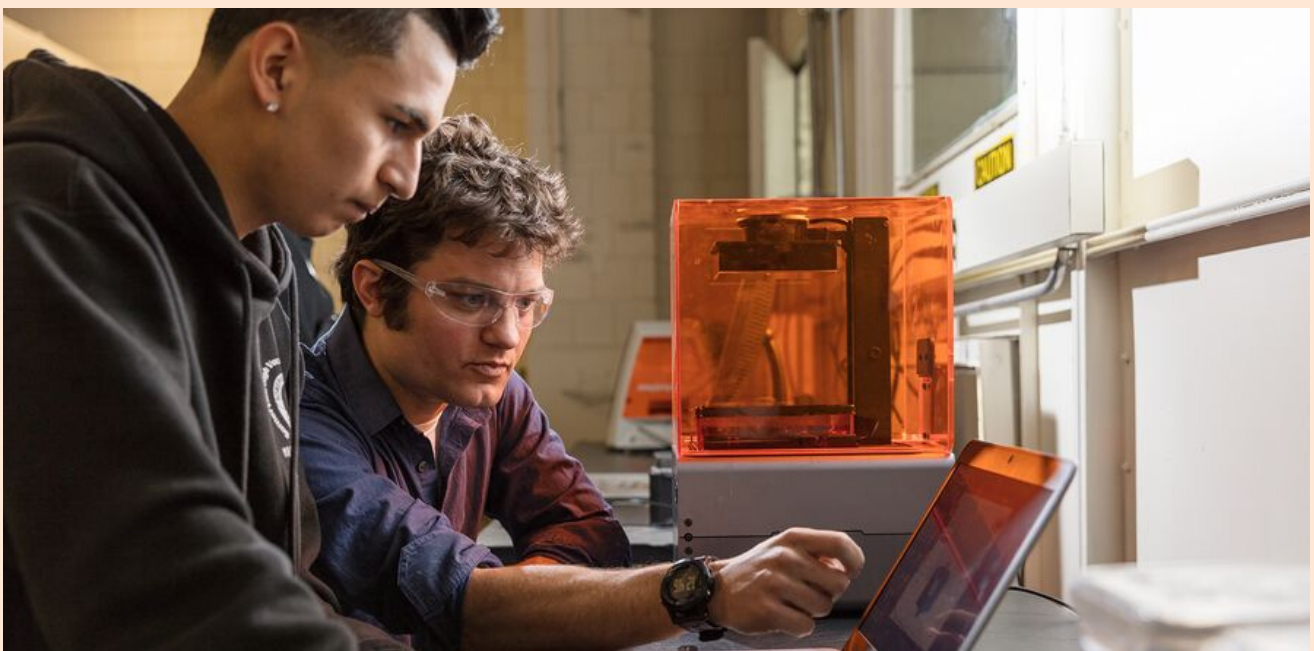
Above all, Somerville is a leader in municipal collaboration with those with good ideas who want to partner to improve our city. The Clean-tech and Urban Lab programs partner with startups to pilot their early-stage technologies on City property. We foster relationships with institutes of higher education such as Harvard’s By All Means initiative to improve educational outcomes for our students. As Somerville steps into the next decade of the new millennium, we want to build upon the collaborative models we have pioneered to create and sustain a functioning and vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem into the future.

II. Project Vision

The City is seeking “Community Innovation Center” project proposals that leverage existing transportation, education, industry, and community connections, including but not limited to: cultural and artistic uses, educational uses, manufacturing and design uses, co-working or incubator spaces, publicly accessible space, research and office space. As startup companies, small businesses and innovative not-for-profit organizations grow and continue to thrive in Somerville, there remains an unmet need to provide resources to these organizations that are crucial to transforming Somerville into a leading hub for innovation. This project represents an opportunity for industry, academic, real estate, and organizations that foster innovation, the commercialization of academic research, and job creation to create a physical space and hub in Somerville. Projects can include both for-profit and community components.

The RFI seeks proposals that are consistent with values and priorities of Somerville as articulated in SomerVision, the City’s comprehensive plan. The values and goals in SomerVision grew from a three-year effort where residents articulated a comprehensive vision for job creation, affordable housing, open space, transit, environmental stewardship, equity, education and other goals aimed at keeping all our residents and businesses flourishing.

Potential applicants can include universities and educational institutions, non-profit agencies, co-working space operators, and other entities. Responses should include proposed programming, target populations, site-specific details if desired, and needs or assistance from the City of Somerville to make the project possible.



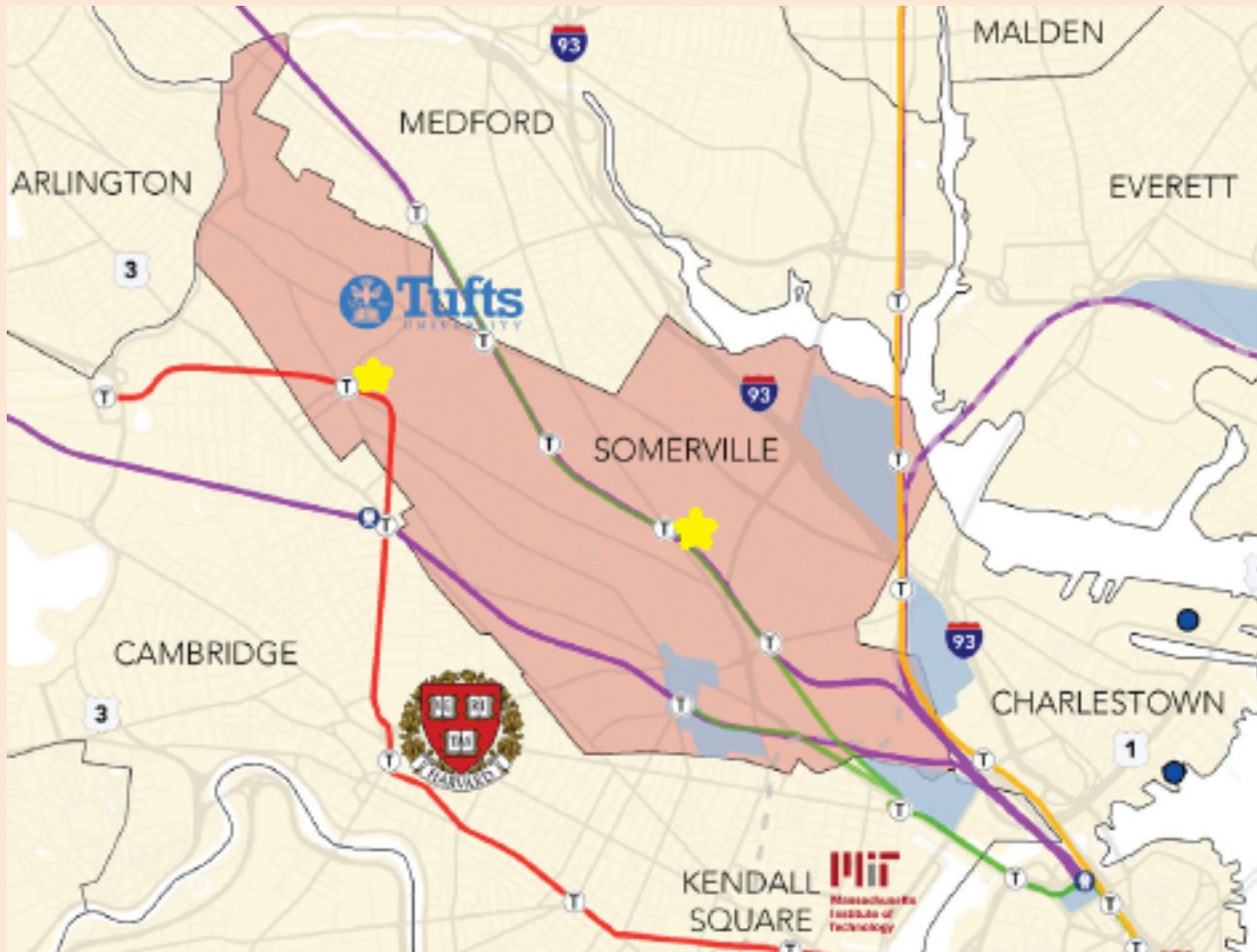
III. Project Objectives

Successful projects will support one or more of the following objectives:

- Diversify Somerville's economy by supporting entrepreneurship and innovation for startups and small businesses that create high-quality, high paying jobs;
- Provide affordable office space with flexible lease options for start-up businesses;
- Provide access to financial counseling and resources that specialize in the funding of start-up businesses and existing businesses looking to grow;
- Provide classroom training and educational programs for program participants and the general business community;
- Fill a current gap in the space needs of new or innovative industries, business models, or working models;
- Focus on equity and serving low-income residents and protected classes;
- Co-locate an interesting and useful selection of services, institutions, or initiatives; and
- Create an innovative, exciting project and space that will draw on Somerville's existing assets and attract the creative capital to be a unique anchor institution for the host neighborhood and the City at large.

The proposals generated by this RFI will be used by the community and City to better understand potential partnerships, to explore the universe of possible projects, and to contribute to existing conversations around neighborhood planning and community spaces. Future phases may include a Request for Proposal (RFP) disposition process.

IV. Prospective Project Sites



The following sites, represented by the yellow stars in the map above, are surplus City-owned properties that may make strong candidate locations for a Community Innovation Center. They are surrounded by the world-class research universities of Harvard, MIT & Tufts. These sites are well connected and easily accessible to key population centers by public transit and high-tech clusters such as Cambridge's Kendall Square and the Boston Seaport. These sites are not exhaustive of possible locations and the applicant is encouraged to propose other sites, publicly or privately-owned, not listed below.

45 College Avenue



Square footage: 5,380

Current Zoning: Central Business District (CBD)

Proposed Zoning: Civic (Civ)

45 College Avenue is a former church building located steps to the Red Line, a half mile from Tufts University, and in the heart of the vibrant cultural scene of Davis Square.

This building is intended to fulfill some programmatic requirements for the West Somerville Public Library branch across the street, primarily a large community space. However, there is additional square footage that can accommodate other uses as well. Specific to this site, we are looking for proposals that include community space with priority access to occasional library activities.

Davis Square is home to diverse scene of independent food establishments as well as dozens of tech companies in industries such as cybersecurity and digital marketing.

See the Davis Square Neighborhood Plan for more information on Davis Square.



350 Medford St.



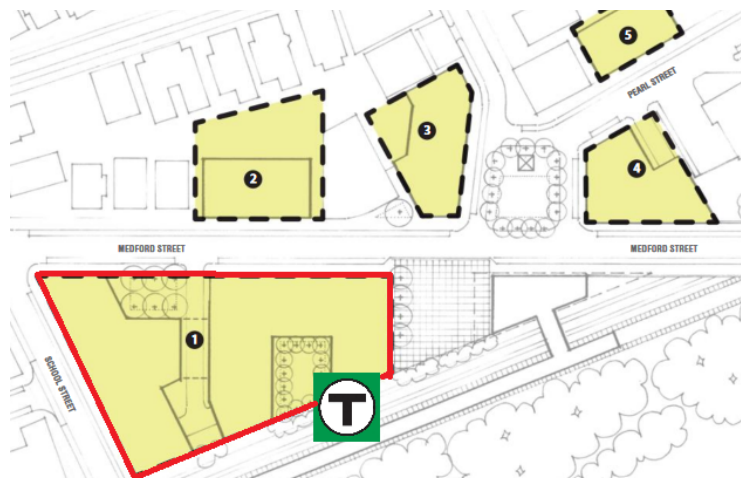
The Homan's site in Gilman Square (outlined in red below) is a vacant site formerly occupied by the Homan's Building. The structure was demolished in April of 2019 as part of the Green Line Extension project. The Gilman Square Green Line station will be located adjacent to the site. The Green Line project will extend north to Tufts University and southeast to Lechmere in Cambridge. Across the tracks from the Homan's site are City Hall as well as the Somerville High School which is currently under construction to be a \$256 million state-of-the-art education facility to be completed in 2021.

Square Footage/acreage: 1.11 acres

Current Zoning: Business A (BA)

Proposed Zoning: Mid-Rise 4 (MR4)

This site is unique as it is part of a larger neighborhood transformation in Gilman Square as one of five opportunity sites within a block of the future Green Line station. The Homan's site, as the largest, has great potential as the anchor of a reimagined neighborhood.



Proposal Format

A. Your Organization

Include the following:

1. Address, primary contact person, and email
2. What is your organization's unique value proposition and/or mission?
3. Describe similar projects or proposals your organization has developed or supported, if any. What was your role?

B. Project Narrative

Include the following:

1. Describe your proposed project vision.
 - a. Programming and uses
 - b. Site and space requirements if applicable
 - c. Equipment and tool requirements
 - d. Potential partnerships
2. Who are the audiences you are seeking to serve? How do you prioritize low-income communities and/or protected classes?
3. What research have you conducted or used to develop your vision?
4. What are the potential benefits to your primary audience?
5. What are the potential benefits, qualitative or quantitative, to Somerville and/or immediate neighborhood? (i.e. local jobs, public access, educational resources, public art, etc).
6. What barriers would you have to executing your project vision? (i.e. economic, technical, or regulatory).
7. Define the stages and process for development, funding sources and the suitability and cost for your project.
8. How could the City of Somerville best support the proposed project?

Effect of this RFI

This RFI is for information and planning purposes only and shall not be construed as a solicitation or as an obligation on the part of the City to issue any competitive procurement or award a contract. The City will not award a contract on the basis of responses to this RFI nor otherwise pay for the preparation of any information submitted, for any vendor presentation, or the City's use of such information. All responses to this RFI will be public record under the Massachusetts' Public Records Law, Mass. Gen. L. ch. 66 s. 10, regardless of confidentiality notices to the contrary.

Submission Instructions

To submit proposals or for more information please contact Ben Sommer, economic development specialist, at bsommer@somervillema.gov or (617) 625-6600 x2513